

# THE ATHENÆUM

Relating to Fiction.

No. 4517.

SATURDAY, MAY 23, 1914.

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## PROBLEMS OF MEN AND WOMEN.

*Full Swing.* By Frank Danby. (Cassell & Co., 6s.)

THIS is a sufficiently clever study, so far as it goes, of a woman who mars her own life by her unduly narrow self-consciousness, her lack of power to interpret herself, and her refusal to apprehend or admit the light and shade in the characters and actions of those who surround her. She suffers shipwreck repeatedly, emerging shattered, but still pitifully courageous and insistent on the ideal that governs her whole life—that ideal wherein right and wrong are colours as clear as black and white, with no greys for indefinite, indecipherable shades in either.

She insists on marrying the wrong man; she fails to control her young step-sister, and later her own son, whom she never succeeds in understanding. Finally, though all difficulties are successfully and happily cleared up, luck rather than effort must be praised for the solution.

In the book as a whole there is far too much incident, a superfluity of detail and intrigue. This excess lowers the book from the standard it might possibly have attained as a psychological study; it lessens the realism, infringes upon the conviction. We feel that we are reading a story put together with good technique, but obviously written for its market; the human document becomes a palimpsest.

Incidentally, we wish to take exception to the picture of Blaythway Bird. That picture is drawn from life, the life of one who, for all his faults, was unquestionably far more praiseworthy than the effigy presented here. Certain obvious features have been taken, not in their true light as

superficial, but as essential to the man; and the author is unfair in other ways. In any case, excess in portrayal is a mistake in itself, an indication of lack of proportion; and lack of proportion is in some respects evident in this book. The study of a woman, intelligent, upright, conscientious, and deeply thoughtful for others—oblivious, indeed, of her own self—would have been sufficient to absorb the whole main interest of the story. We can see how such a one, in contact with a father, a husband, a son, is fated to discover the dangers and the disillusionments inevitable in the conflict of theory and practice.

*Maid of the Mist.* By John Oxenham. (Hodder & Stoughton, 6s.)

AMONG stories which might be roughly classified as "Adam and Eve fiction" Mr. Oxenham's novel takes a fairly high place. The juxtaposition of a marriageable couple, unacquainted with each other, on a "desert island" suggests to him the usual embarrassments and courtesies, the usual restraint and loving surrender. Expectant of a discreet, yet fervid appeal to his sympathy, the reader is not disappointed; but the novel is more than a piquant dish, as its hero exhibits so lofty an unselfishness before he leaves populous England that it is impossible to regard his unconventional happiness cynically. Mr. Oxenham excels in the glorification of girlhood and the instinct for mating: his heroine is constantly "The Girl" (article and substantive both capitalized), and she is, on the whole, a charming and natural person.

The time of the story allows "The Girl" to remember the French Revolution, she being a niece of Louis XVI. The island on which she and her lover dwell for more than five years is Sable Island, notorious once for wrecks. Mr. Oxenham makes skilful use of the sinister weather associated with it, and employs its wild birds as a dreadful retinue of Nemesis when the arch-villain of his story has sufficiently alarmed the reader.

*The Playground.* By the Author of 'Mastering Flame.' (Mills & Boon, 6s.)

WE doubt whether the author of 'Mastering Flame' and 'Ashes of Incense' will be wise to put the title of this book on the cover of his next. In a superficial way he deals with a problem which is the cause of a great deal of domestic tragedy in our day. A husband whose interests lie largely in social reform marries a celebrated actress whose whole being is absorbed by the stage. Directly after marriage, and before there is any thought of children, the husband expects his wife to content herself with social flummery, and in spite of his views of reform spends money lavishly to secure such empty-headed contentment. A far from unusual and certainly not uninteresting set of circumstances being thus presented, we expected—as the event proved—too much of the author. The working-out is along

lines which are conventional yet do not strike us as convincing.

The book will, in fact, appeal more readily to the average novel-reader's intelligence than a perusal of the writer's former work had led us to expect.

*Splinters.* (Hurst & Blackett, 6s.)

THE sub-title of this novel describes it as the "life story of a woman and her poet-lover, told by their letters." She opens the tale with a letter which reveals that they have been parted for some time, owing to his discovery of a past infidelity on her part. The poet replies, and a renewal of correspondence results. We learn that, just as they were on the eve of marriage, he was called away to the death-bed of a friend in Constantinople, and during his absence of three weeks she yielded to what she calls "the deadly fascination of an old lover."

Considerably later she explains that, owing to the action of the censor (the Balkan War was proceeding at the time), she received no communication from him beyond the one telegram announcing his return, but immediately discounts any effort at justification of her lapse from virtue by declaring that her trust in him never failed. This inexplicable treachery to what she subsequently realizes is the best she has ever known is the cause of much suffering to both: to him, because he recognizes that only the spontaneous effort of her individual will is of value, and where love does not freely give he will not compel; to her, because, in spite of his forgiveness, she discovers how difficult it is to forgive herself.

Before, however, she arrives at such sorrowful self-knowledge, we hear of her travels in many places—Venice, Rome, Cornwall, the Austrian Tyrol, and finally London—while his letters are mostly written on board a trawler working between Boston and Iceland, and his descriptions of the lives and labour of the trawler-men afford a welcome relief to the self-torturing introspection of hers.

Naturally, in such a correspondence there is ample opportunity for the revelation of character, but while her letters show first of all a self-conscious charm, his betray a finely tempered mind of uncommon magnanimity, wherein is no shadow of priggishness. They are probably saved from that pitfall by their humour, which is abundant and spontaneous, and there are many passages which prove his deep insight and real sympathy. When she reproaches him for passing judgment if he truly loves her, he asks:—

"How else? Does not the greatest love the world has ever known sit in judgment on the world? Should I sit in judgment—as you call it—if I did not love?... To condemn is not to hate, Elaine! The condemnation crucifies none so keenly as the judge."

Two specimens of his poems are enclosed in his letters, but we must frankly confess to a feeling of bewilderment on reading them. One of them deals with a woman's attitude towards the demands of a man, in such a manner that



it is not possible to tell whether the confusion of thought is intentional—as depicting the tangled workings of a woman's mind—or the result of the writer's obvious admiration for Browning, including his occasional congestion of ideas. There is also a fatal facility of alliteration which defeats its own end by hindering instead of helping the flow of the verse. None the less, there are lines of real descriptive beauty which cannot be ignored, and of which we give a sample :—

Passing the sleeping stream whose ways of glass  
Down-glimmered through the honeyed golden walls  
Of dreaming gorse, I tread the drowsy ling  
Where slumbering blooms lift languid lips to woo  
The drunken bees that blunder in their way—  
And now the heaven's blue beneath our feet  
Lies like a cloud-flecked sea: the world retires  
Hushed in a haze of heat: here then secure  
From drone of noonbells and the valley's sloth  
I dare the sun himself to show what fault  
Or flaw he finds in all love's armoury:  
And daring too the challenge of your eyes,  
I fling the last least shimmering gauze aside  
And come to prove and to be proved of you.

At the risk of being considered over-severe, we must add that many of the quotations used in these letters are either inaccurate or ungrammatical, particularly those given in French.

*The Judgment of Eve.* By May Sinclair. (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

MISS SINCLAIR disarms her critics by undertaking the work of criticism herself in an introduction. She has some justification. She ought to know best what her aim was, but we must decline to share her preference for the 'Gift,' however delicately subtle its penetration into a woman's ways and motives. She is a past mistress of innuendo; but the dis-  
sective psychology of this volume scarcely reaches the brilliancy of which she showed herself capable in 'The Divine Fire,' or the tragic realism which held the attention in 'The Combined Maze.'

Her quaint conceits are all her own, as the following description of a young girl's timidity will attest :—

"A little shy and difficult to approach, Phœbe's mind, but he had found out what it liked best, and it pleased him to see how confidently and delicately it, so to speak, ate out of his hand."

'The Judgment of Eve' is a relentless description of a woman swamped by her maternity, and contains a moral for those who rashly add to the population of the country, regardless of the drain it entails on the vitality of its womanhood.

*The Heart of Monica.* By Rosina Filippi. (Cassell & Co., 3s. 6d.)

LETTERS are not, perhaps, the safest or happiest form of expression for a story; they are apt to exaggerate the impression of length, sometimes of tedium, or else to be too formal, dragged into harmony with the style or subject, and so contrasting unfavourably with letters of real life. In the book before us the impression of length is avoided: it is too swift in its movement for fatigue. Without sacrifice of style or undue emphasis of detail, a pathetic story is told as it should be told, with sincerity and those touches

of genuine humour at small things and joy in beautiful things that light up the dark places in life.

*Judas the Woman.* By F. C. and A. T. Philips. (Eveleigh Nash, 6s.)

WE cannot but condemn the tone of this book, which is well and cleverly written by a sure and light hand, but deplorable in its condonation (we can choose no other word) of issues that make not so much for immorality as for absolute non-morality. The writers—we can at least speak for F. C. Philips—have already given us excellent work of its kind: themes of eminently human interest treated with delicate sympathy and appropriate justice. But in the present case we find no pronounced trend of sympathy, or even predilection; justice is not invited to the field; all we find is clever, light technique, and a picturesque collation of incidents unpardonable in themselves, and in no way palliated by their sordid setting. The book has already appeared in serial form, and, if its character is due to that circumstance, affords one more instance of the strange standards of public taste revealed in the fiction chosen for weekly and daily consumption.

*The Marriage Lines.* By J. S. Fletcher. (Eveleigh Nash, 6s.)

A WELL-CONSTRUCTED and withal entertaining novel is more easy to recommend on general grounds than one loosely knit, but with greater excitement in it. Not that the one under notice lacks dramatic incident; the scene of the murder of the old hag who had overheard the father tell of the illegitimacy of the first-born is decidedly effective. The character of the eldest son with his adherence to a sense of duty—all the more rigid by reason of his total lack of imagination—is good, but then so are all the others. In fact, the tale is an unpretentious and solid piece of work which no one can read with anything other than advantage.

*The Oyster.* By a Peer. (John Long, 6s.)

DISAPPOINTING in its opening pages, the book reveals, after the first few chapters, a genuine interest which develops well. The theme is unusual, but simple. Esmé Carteret, the wife of a poor man, afraid of the expense of maternity and all the future it entails, transfers—at a price—her son to her friend Denise, whose husband desires and welcomes an heir as his greatest treasure. The author shows the effect that maternity—real in the case of the one, assumed with the other—has on the life and thought of the two women, culminating in deceit, disillusion, and tragedy.

The social atmosphere seems at the outset overlaid, and there is a tendency to crowd and confuse the incident. In a word, the writer has to warm to his subject in his character-drawing and touches the cliché at times. In his concentration upon his theme, he has left his detail unstudied, and then filled it in on conventional lines.

## STORIES OF THE OUTLANDS.

*Where Bonds are Loosed.* By Grant Watson. (Duckworth & Co., 6s.)

THE author has produced an interesting study of isolation and its effects on two men and a woman. Sherwin, out of luck in New Ireland, visits Kaimaru in the hope of finding employment as a sheep-shearer. By a chance meeting he picks up a job on Kanna Island. The hospital on this island, as well as that on Fenton Island—two isolation centres for sick natives—are under the charge of a drunken, incapable doctor, who has to give place to a clever and energetic successor. The latter succeeds in eliminating the influence of the two resident nurses in favour of the far more efficient Alice Desmond, a woman "with a past." Then the isolation and the general atmosphere of their environment begin their deadly work on the young doctor and his new matron.

Eager for reputation and research, indignant at the neglect and carelessness of his predecessor, he comes gradually under the influence of Alice Desmond, whose natural instincts overpower her better self. He struggles with furious constancy against her wiles, and the affair is complicated by the jealousy of Sherwin. A species of duel between the men ensues; the doctor is killed, and Sherwin "annexes" Alice as the prize, with her full acquiescence. The two remain content on Kanna Island, primitive man and submissive mate.

Mr. Watson has evidently given much careful study to his theme. He has a curiously insistent, almost crude treatment and style, emphasizing his points as though he were anxious to drive them fully home. In his descriptions of a corner of the world that undoubtedly lends itself to scenic treatment, he is, perhaps, a little elaborate, though we may, in justice, say that he is not laboured. He has not the incisive rush that we find in Jack London's stories of the South Seas; but he does his subject fair justice, and he presents a picture that we can visualize, even though it may not thrill. If this is a first novel, it is one of considerable promise.

*Blake's Burden.* By Harold Bindloss. (Ward, Lock & Co., 6s.)

MR. BINDLOSS, usually an efficient and pleasing teller of stories, has given quite a good account of himself in the present case. The tale is sufficiently interesting, and the setting, chiefly Canadian of the wilds, lends itself to adequate description, though without undue excitement. The main point—the honour of the hero, clouded by a misunderstanding as to whether he or his cousin had been guilty of cowardice in the face of an attack by an Indian frontier tribe—is cleverly indicated and, we must say, cleverly evaded, in so far as the evidence for the hero is overwhelming to readers of any discrimination: so much the better tribute to the author's portrayal of those who do and those who do not believe in his inno-

cence. It would be unfair to enter into the details of his self-justification, but we may say that they are sufficiently well and naturally set forth.

*Leontas.* By E. J. C. Stevens. (Allen & Co., 6s.)

THIS slight and ineffective story of South African life in the days of the Boer War is treated in a serio-comic mode, both of style and thought, which is irritating. With such rich material as the subject affords, and the local knowledge the writer evidently possesses, a far better book should have resulted.

The one good passage is the trial of an Englishman who loses his memory from shock, imagines himself to be a Boer, and takes up arms against his country. We must, however, hope that it is not a recital of a real episode, but that the officers—cold-blooded, obstinate to visit with the severest penalty a more or less technical offence, and in the face of the strongest evidence for acquittal—are figments of the imagination. Even so, this presentment of British justice is distressing.

*Bosambo of the River.* By Edgar Wallace. (Ward, Lock & Co., 6s.)

THIS is a series of tales about various African tribes, whose wars, intrigues, love-affairs, and diplomatic relations with the British Government form the subject-matter. They are not arranged in the order of their occurrence, which makes things occasionally puzzling for the reader.

Bosambo, a native of the Kroo coast, escapes from a penal settlement of the Liberian Government, and by dint of a certain forcefulness of character, mixed with plenty of native guile, establishes himself as king of the Ochori, one of the tribes of the interior. Here he comes under the jurisdiction of Sanders, the English Commissioner.

Mr. Wallace does not refrain from the usual gibe—in his case quite good-natured—at the short-sighted policy of the Home Government compared with the wise despotism of the man on the spot. One of the tales, in fact, has as its subject the criminal folly of some home official, who, out of sheer slackness, allows an Americanized native to assume the reins of government, and interfere, to a disastrous extent, with the harmony which Sanders was labouring to produce. The latter, indeed, is the real hero of the book, although Bosambo is a strongly drawn figure in his cunning, his savagery, and his peculiar notions about Christianity. The book contains much native humour, and has a certain Biblical simplicity of narrative.

*The Spotted Panther.* By James Francis Dwyer. (Melrose, 6s.)

THOSE who have a taste for adventure can indulge themselves to the full in the 293 pages of Mr. Dwyer's effervescent Americanized English.

The three protagonists meet in an opium den in Banjermassin, whence they rescue

a broken-down Englishman who in his day had stolen from the Orang Bukkit tribes the "Chalice of Everlasting Fire." That inestimable treasure had been, so repute said, stolen by Enrique de Gama, "who is dying in the Sea of China," and had destined it for "my King Juan II." They are shown the wondrous Chalice, the Holy Grail of the Far East, and are told of an equally inestimable companion-treasure, the Great Parong, the sword with which Buddha

"had severed the flaming wire which the legions of sin had bound around the earth, and had cut the stars of the heavens into their proper sizes before flinging them into space."

Thanks to the aid of a damsel descended from De Gama himself, their own strength and resource, and, of course, the luck that belongs to heroes of fiction, they traverse fearful jungles infested with orang-outangs, an appalling morass, a river of mud, and kindred obstacles. They steal the sword, and at once form a scheme on sound business lines for exhibiting it at ten rupees a head to the "four hundred millions" of Buddhists and such in Asia. Further details it would not be fair to divulge.

The style of the book is somewhat turgid and cheapened by repetitions, but on the whole the recital of events is clear and coherent, coupled now and again with picturesque, if insufficiently pruned descriptions of scenery, sunsets, and the like. The writer, who evidently has some knowledge of his ground, has sufficient enthusiasm for his theme to avoid being wearisome, and carries off the improbabilities of his story.

*The Red Wall.* By Frank Savile. (Nelson & Sons, 2s.)

THE book opens with a delightful and exhilarating "row" between the citizens of Panama and sundry American blue-jackets, who (by a happy touch) emphasize their thumps and thwacks by inspiring phrases from 'Colloquial Spanish in a Month,' a guide which would evidently repay perusal, to judge from one quotation at least: "Give me the eyes, the toes, the nose, and the back teeth of the shoemaker's cousin." So bellows one combatant, his arms working "with the weight and rhythm of flails in autumn harvest."

Adventures, with an exceedingly large A, follow fast and furious. Revolution organized by Teutonic duplicity and enterprise; capture and subsequent escape of the Costanaguan President; treachery, met and defeated by deep subtlety; battle, murder, and sudden death; earthquake, flood, long-hidden secrets of Indian ritual and worship—such are among the component parts of a work sufficiently exciting for any one. The hero and heroine save one another's lives at frequent and well-judged intervals, aided by the wholly delightful Don Concepcion, the Port medical officer, who, almost alone among his fellow-citizens, refuses to be bought by Teutonic gold.

## TALES OF OTHER DAYS.

*The Magic Tale of Harvanger and Yolande.*

By G. P. Baker. (Mills & Boon, 6s.)

MR. BAKER makes a somewhat venturesome experiment in entering the field of saga—of adventure, rather, in periods and lands undefined. We cannot read a chapter of his book without thinking at once of 'The Glittering Plain,' and with that masterpiece in our minds, we are the more inclined to seize upon the least inconsistency of diction or treatment.

We do find such inconsistencies here and there: the author makes his characters say, "What wilt thou lay on" this or that event? Surely he had been better advised to use the word "wager." Again, in certain descriptions of scenery he allows his own personality to appear in undue prominence. The descriptions are admirable, but wholly modern, and therefore inconsistent in a work that should read as though it were a rendering from some ancient book. Mr. Baker seems to have read his Malory, but to have departed therefrom in his visions of the beautiful in Nature.

But apart from these things we have a somewhat striking story of distinct charm and originality, the more pleasing in that it transports us to the restful atmosphere of "lands and days that never were." The author understands the value of clarity and simplicity, and the effectiveness of "dark sayings" on the lips of wise men: he observes mystery, but does not deepen it to excess.

We may commend his shipmaster's view of the sea as a teacher of "full understanding" to men:—

"The land is firm and unchanging, but the sea changeth from hour to hour, and is as a living thing to be watched and understood. Those who are of the sea-folk are the best of all men."

This falls into line with Mr. Kipling's "brass-bound" man, and, for that matter, with the delightful saying of Stevenson's Lawless, that excellent old rogue, who says:—

"There never yet was a bad man who was a good shipman; none but the honest and the bold can endure me this tossing of a ship."

*Silver Sand.* By S. R. Crockett. (Hodder & Stoughton, 6s.)

THIS book, the last from Mr. Crockett's pen, shows happily the gift he undoubtedly possessed of telling a good Scots story. He knew and loved his Galloway, her scenes and sites, her legends, her sore trials and stirring episodes. In the recital of the doings of John Faa he has bequeathed to us an adequate presentment of an interesting period. We have no intention of forestalling the reader by any description of the book; but we feel sure that those who have followed all Mr. Crockett has written will not find their interest or admiration diminished by this last work.

There are, of course, limitations. The style, especially in matter of simile, is apt to become florid and unreal, and



the character-drawing is open to similar reproach. Lillas, the fair lady whom "Silver Sand" wins for his own at the last, is too sprightly, too forward—as though the writer were determined to justify his opinion of her in every word she says.

But, on the whole, the characterization of the different persons is clear, reasonably shrewd, and lifelike. On small points Mr. Crockett was careless. "The Park ways are her ways, and no one else need apply," does not strike us as a phrase for a seventeenth-century Galloway notable. We cannot see why the "old dominie," of all people, should speak of "Terance." The reference to Naboth's widow puzzles us in its connexion with Bathsheba. On the other hand, we like the phrase that describes the persecuted taking their bread day by day, in uncertainty and trembling, "from the hollow of God's hand." On the humorous side, this concerning baptism is good:—

"If the bairn greets, just whammle him over on his bit stamback. Maist of mine got the water of reconciliation in the back o' their necks, and feint a bit the waur were they."

2010. By the Author of 'The Adventures of John Johns.' (Werner Laurie, 6s.)

IN this tale of the future men wear whole-piece woollen clothing, and take for their midday nourishment "two sticks of concentrated Omnium, an electric calorification with an instrument, and a glass of water from a pure Bohemian spring." An absolutely antediluvian span of life and work is secured by such means. Mental capacity is a mere drug in such a market. Alexander Silson, for example, the chief assistant of Caesar Brent (the protagonist of the book, and one of the two surviving "Universals"—on that the author does not enlighten us), has "mastered science, although not more than thirty," and possesses an "encyclopædic mind."

Incident of a rather specious and factitious nature is plentiful. The book opens with the bitter contest in which Brent is involved because he desires to apply a new process to the human brain, whereby all the knowledge and experience of the past can be imparted to unborn posterity. A revolt is then threatened from the Far West; the negroes wish to intermarry with the whites, and Caesar Brent promptly applies a pigment which disposes of the curse of colour.

The main theme, however, of the book is the rising throughout "Dead Asia and the murmuring East," engineered by a talented and masterful, but Orientally feminine leader. That danger is averted by a timely comet, and the European race emerges victorious and supreme; the "reign of lasting happiness" begins. Interest is less conspicuous than incident, as is often the case with such views of futurity, of which, perhaps, the chief merit is that they teach us contentment—comparative, at least—with our own generation.

### SOCIAL STUDIES.

*Chignett Street: a Provided School.* By B. Paul Neuman. (Smith, Elder & Co., 6s. net.)

MR. NEUMAN informs us in his Preface that several of these short stories have already appeared in *The Westminster Gazette*, *Pall Mall Magazine*, &c. They are, he also points out, the result of his impressions of Council School life and manners. Here is the twofold explanation of a certain lack of the spontaneous force that was evident in 'Roddles.' Mr. Neuman has checked the impulse, apparent, however, in certain touches of description and characterization, to let himself go.

We find here sufficiently pleasing sketches of his Council schools: boys, masters, inspectors. Occasionally a parent, and in one case a curate, are decently sketched, sometimes placidly and reasonably filled in, against that exact, drab background which we expect to contemplate, judging from the Introduction. Of course, it may all be true; but we cannot wholly away with annoyance and suspicion, especially after reading just before the Introduction the vivid lines on 'Bob of the Mews,' which begin:—

Father is trying to spot the winner,  
Bess is washing, and that 's why Bob  
Has got a penny to spend on his dinner.

In these lines we seem to see the genuine, raw, and unadulterated reality which is absent (or, should we say, scraped off by a file?) from these careful stories of the Chignett Street school.

*London Circus.* By Henry Baerlein. (Fifield, 6s.)

WE should like to apply to this book the word beloved of our Late Georgian forefathers—"diverting." The author presents one personage after another quite airily, pleasantly, naturally, yet in a manner that bewilders while it amuses. We feel rather in the position of one who, waiting for the right number, has to overhear other people's conversations on the telephone.

Derunj, the agreeable and idealistic young Syrian, whose great religious picture excites all London (through the medium of *The Daily Lightning*); Laura, his housemaid-wife—a treasure of a wife and a most attractive personality; Mark Sartorius, learned in penguins; Shirley Grice, art expert without experience; Sir Matthew Drane—all come and go in front of us, and say many excellent and witty words. We are taken to a Cabinet meeting in one chapter, and we leave it with the growing conviction that we have been present at the "real thing"; we trust so, at least: it would be too terrible to suppose it otherwise. Mr. Baerlein is akin to Mr. Hilaire Belloc in his view of politics.

We really owe it to our sense of gratitude to record one Brookfield story:—

"Did they expect me to resign the Censorship and murmur, Domine, non dignus sum; Lord, I am not Galsworthy?"

We also give thanks for a variant of Goldsmith's Pietro Perugino about Shirley Grice, to whom had been explained the terms "chiaroscuro," "Albert Cuyp," and "impasto": "On Monday afternoon he started criticizing art."

We trust that Mr. Baerlein will not make too many enemies by his use of real names, though we may point out that he should have said Grasso instead of "Grassi" in the case of that eminent actor.

Mr. Baerlein has a pleasing trick of unearthing similes from the antique, such as the astronomer Cassini and the *sidera Lodoicea*, named after the Roi Soleil—"a new decoration conferred by the Almighty on the Emperor"—and, even better, Philonous, the subscriber to the *Journal de Bruxelles*, who— But it is not fair to the author to quote overmuch; let readers search for themselves.

*Matthew Hargreaves.* By S. G. Tallentyre. (Smith, Elder & Co., 6s.)

THE type of man of whom Matthew Hargreaves is an excellent example is a bond of union between the grandchildren of those whose forbears were City men—wholesale merchants, a distinct line being drawn between themselves and retailers on the one hand, and themselves and the professions on the other. All in this wide circle have had, in some instances still have, such relatives or memories of such relatives. With sharp, sure strokes the man and his times are outlined, a number of shrewd sayings peppered here and there affording a pleasant relief.

Matthew respected the conventions, and had *politesse de cœur* to make amends for his gruffness. He loved children and evaded barmaids. He would have agreed that "the poor in a loomp" is bad, but had his shirts made at home to relieve his conscience after reading Hood's famous poem. He was a man prone to attach himself to immobile possessions, an attachment which, as the author remarks, soon renders a man immobile himself.

Our fathers have told us of the times in which he lived—of the hatred of "mounseer," of the fear of ritual, of the terrible patience in suffering one's own afflictions and the afflictions of other people which was characteristic of the period, of the tedious monotony of the meat and drink of the inns, and the almost inconceivable desecration of the churches, the self-complacency of the middle classes, the "education" of the young ladies of the period, and the suspicion with which a woman of evident intelligence was regarded.

Naturally such a man as Matthew Hargreaves in choosing a wife takes one who offers the balm of pleasant agreement with all he says. There comes a time, however, when he realizes what he has thereby lost. In the manner in which he bears the knowledge his sterling worth is displayed.

There are a few crudities of expression, but the effective characterization makes us forget them.

*His Official Fiancée.* By Berta Ruck (Mrs. Oliver Onions). (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

To take a subject which might well be thought threadbare, and to weave out of it a readable tale, is in itself no mean achievement, and that Mrs. Oliver Onions has done. A girl, gently bred, but forced to earn her living by type-writing, is suddenly asked to act as the fiancée of her wealthy employer. How she learnt to see behind his office mask, and how he learnt to appreciate her, is so cleverly told that we really forget to question why he should have found it necessary to appear so disagreeable to his employees, or why his employees should never have suspected he might be quite human out of office hours. The tale in itself is good, and much good may come to some who see the absurdity of a condition of things which is too often excused on some silly plea that "business is business."

*The House in Demetrius Road.* By J. D. Beresford. (Heinemann, 6s.)

SOME compensation for having had a knowledge of evil thrust upon one may lie in the appreciation of its artistic presentment by an author like Mr. Beresford. The sense of tragedy brooding over the abode of a dipsomaniac is painfully conveyed to such a one. If we have a criticism to make at all, it is that the author insists on our taking for granted the capabilities of those beneath the cloud, though they demonstrate the contrary by many of their actions. For instance, though the patient's secretary is aware of the total reversal of character which the craving for drink will make in a man otherwise straightforward, he undertakes to spend the night in the room of his employer, but is tricked by the wiliness which has secreted flasks of spirit among the bedclothes.

Such incidents are quite in keeping with the guile of the one and the ordinary mental calibre of the other; the explanation of the lack of foresight shown lies perhaps in the numbing of faculty which grips those who are fighting what is in most cases a losing battle. This is not one of the few cases of victory, and the secretary and the patient's sister blame themselves for the set-back of the man because they gave way to their affection for each other, instead of concentrating all their care on the subject of their ministrations. The mental and physical struggle waged between their care for the drunkard and their love for each other is unerringly portrayed. The result of the story is a strengthening of the opinion that the disease is not one for private treatment, and that, if it is attempted, the harm done to the custodians is more important than the good accruing to the patient.

*The Theorist.* By Allen Abbott. (Melrose, 6s.)

THE publisher, who makes himself responsible for a "New Novelist Library," would deserve more gratitude from the public if he did not include in it volumes cumbered with the faults of the tyro. Surely any competent publisher's reader could have indicated to Mr. Abbott how to present his excellent matter in more readable form. "The Theorist" is a mother who advocates "advanced" views on love, but shrinks from putting them in practice herself, and is scandalized when her daughter does so. Her selfishness rather than her theorizing is responsible for her unhappiness, in the same way that the altruism of her daughter rather than her abandonment of her mother's theories is responsible for her happiness. Good material is spoilt by the lack of a practised hand in the "making up."

#### LOCAL STUDIES.

*Waiting.* By Gerald O'Donovan. (Macmillan & Co., 6s.)

WE have here the tale of the struggle of a talented and ambitious youth, the son of an Irish peasant, against the almost overpowering strength of prejudice and priestly intrigue. Maurice Blake hopes to gain, on his merits, the mastership of Bournen village school. He does gain the post, but the deciding factor is the heavy bribe given by his father to the parish priest, Father James Mahon.

Unfortunately for his prospects, he falls in love with a girl of a Protestant family, and at once finds himself face to face with the priestly ultimatum. No dispensation can, or will, be allowed, though Maurice pleads hard for it, even with the bishop of the diocese. If the girl will not be converted, Maurice must choose between her and his career.

Choosing the girl, he at once loses his school. His attempt to stand for Parliament is swiftly frustrated by an adroit campaign wherein his marriage is held up as no marriage, but a public scandal. The blow falls, with equal severity and injustice, not only on him, but also on his devoted friend and former schoolmaster, Driscoll, who is refused absolution on his death-bed for having sheltered the "guilty couple." The book closes on a note of hope for a fairer and less prejudiced future for Maurice, and for Ireland in general.

The characters of Father James Mahon and his satellites in intrigue, their methods, conversation, and thoughts, are drawn with such cold clarity and precision as to suggest a thorough first-hand knowledge on the part of the author. We cannot disbelieve or modify what he gives us. We can but hope that he is presenting a special case, an isolated instance, but the entire lack of exaggeration, malevolence, and (shall we say?) enthusiasm, is depressing evidence for the reality of the picture. The "mission" of the Seraphite Fathers,

in conjunction with Father Mahon—as striking a chapter as any in the book—speaks for itself.

Indeed, the strongest point in Mr. O'Donovan is this calm and lifelike presentment of his figures. Equally quiet and convincing is the delineation of the stage scenery. Many passages and sentiments would lose their force, would seem unduly poetic, even inflated, were they not put into the mouths of the characters to whom they are best suited. Impersonality may have its dangers, but it does carry conviction when joined to studied realism, and it permits a freedom of expression which would miss its effect otherwise.

*Lismoye: an Experiment in Ireland.* By B. M. Croker. (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

MRS. CROKER in this book makes no pretence of writing anything more than a simple, straightforward account of the visit of an English society heiress to poor relations in Ireland whom she had never seen, and about whom she knew nothing. She presents herself in the character of a poor relation, and eventually decides to reside altogether in her mother's country. The story as a whole is interesting for its clear and lifelike character-drawing. The Irish atmosphere is well studied, and enhances the other good qualities of the book. The writing is occasionally loose, and we think French phrases are over-used.

*Megan of the Dark Isle.* By Mrs. J. O. Arnold. (Alston Rivers, 6s.)

IN this interesting story of life in Anglesea during the fifties the characterization is quiet and sound, and the general plan well conceived and never unduly forced. The author incorporates with some skill extracts from the old Welsh legends, as chronicled by her antiquarian hero David Thelwall.

A most amusing and attractive character is the old "wise woman," Mother Glyn, who confronts and defeats the Church on its own battle-ground, and justifies palmistry and other sorceries by apt quotations from Scripture.

*Angels in Wales.* By Margam Jones. (John Long, 6s.)

THIS book, dealing as it does with the religious and emotional side of Welsh country-folk, and treated in a spirit consistent therewith, is not likely to have more than a limited appeal. As an evidently faithful picture it will doubtless interest those who know the country and the people portrayed, but for the world at large it has not that deeper, more humanizing touch which alone can commend a special subject, treated as such.

*Westways.* By S. Weir Mitchell. (Fisher Unwin, 6s.)

THOUGH the sub-title of this novel, "A Village Chronicle," is accurate, it is not by any means exhaustive. The book contains also many graphically narrated incidents connected with the American



Civil War, which did not touch directly the village after which the book is named. In addition, we have a convincing outline of how a "coddled" boy wins to virility under the influence of a squire who sets manly honour above life and fortune. The narrative is set down with a pleasing simplicity, though the book need not have included so many small repetitions.

*La Vierge du Lac.* Par Isabelle Kaiser. (Paris, Perrin, 3fr. 50.)

THIS tale of a little valley in the Unterwalden concerns the draining of the lake in its midst. It is characterized by much imagination and a poetic style, but it somehow falls short of conviction. The life and ways of the villagers, their manners and customs, fail to impress themselves on us as inevitable in the surroundings in which they are placed, and at an early stage we become conscious of the artificial element in their simplicity.

*The North Afire.* By W. Douglas Newton. (Methuen & Co., 2s. net.)

WE are not so much interested in the sub-title of this book, 'A Picture of What May Be,' as in the author's perception of what is, though his pictures of riot and bloodshed are vivid enough to stir the imagination of the most callous. Most commendable are his biting remarks on parliamentary loquacity, the questionableness of calling certain productions "news"-papers, the Nemesis which some employers in the North-East of Ireland are likely to bring upon themselves by their systematic underpayment of the worker, and the position of privates who cannot resign if war breaks out. Even to-day there are people who will learn for the first time through fiction how Irish finance is behind a great deal of Neo-Celtic ostensible sentiment.

There is, in fact, much that is noteworthy in these 200 pages of large type widely spaced, and no reader should neglect them on the ground that they offer insufficient measure.

*Tansy.* By Tickner Edwardes. (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

OUT of his abundance of country lore, especially that which appertains to Sussex, Mr. Edwardes has given us another entertaining and, withal, informing novel.

Incidentally it has a bearing on one of the larger social problems of the day—women's work. A girl born and brought up practically in a sheepfold offers herself, and is accepted, as shepherd on the death of her father. This death occurs on their arrival at a farm owned by one of those patriarchs for which Sussex is famous, and worked by his two sons. Of widely differing temperaments, both sons have experienced tragic love-affairs, which do not, however, prevent them both from falling in love with the shepherdess.

Recurring tragedy is avoided by the capable and sympathetic understanding of the parson's daughter, aided by the

village taxidermist, the narrator of the tale. Though not likely to become a Sussex classic, this novel should secure many readers among those who are interested in the country, its life, work, and folk.

## TRANSLATIONS.

*The Death of a Nobody.* By Jules Romains. Translated by Desmond MacCarthy and Sydney Waterlow. (Howard Latimer, 4s. 6d.)

THIS is a rather unusual little work—a study, not a "novel" in any sense. It presents the effect of the outer world in sensation upon a man. Awakening for the first time to that kind of limited consciousness that makes for wonder and fear, he feels the immensity of the world around and about him in opposition, even antagonism, to his own insignificance.

He dies, and immediately after his death, by a curious transference of technique and thought, the effect of his personality (in memory and suggestion) is shown as it acts upon a variety of people: the *concierge* who finds him dead in his room, the little girls who collect money from the other tenants of the house for his wreath, his old father in Auvergne, the people who take part in the funeral procession that "resembled a fleet of boats with the memory of the dead man wandering in and out like a white swan."

The point of view is morbid perhaps, but interesting as vivifying those small, obscure corners of the mind on which light is shed now and again by some uncanny agency of sense-stimulus. We are reminded of those passages in Mr. Douglas's book 'The House with the Green Shutters' that deal with young Gourlay, that martyr to a sensory perceptiveness that was too strong for the intellect. Mr. Douglas represented something of this strange frightening objectivity of the outside but ever-imminent world; but he chose a special "subject," one who was peculiarly sensitive—from his very weakness—to such influences. M. Romains shows their effect on a multitude of types, but he, too, prefers those who by reason of their own personal insignificance are also not exempt from partial martyrdom in this respect. The effect on the reader is, as one of the translators (Mr. MacCarthy) says in his Preface, "queer"; it suggests even something of what we may suppose to pass in the mind of a Futurist who paints his ideas into the objects he is looking at.

Whatever may be said—here, again, we refer to the Preface—of the interest of the "actions, lives, and deaths of individuals as moments in a great process," there is a difference between giving the objective aspect, as here, and the subjective aspect of that process. On the whole, it is surely individuality that is of the greater interest; the subjection of individuality to its environment suggests a lower view of humanity—interesting, and perhaps attractive, but hardly permanent in its value.

*Shallow Soil.* By Knut Hamsun. (Duckworth & Co., 6s.)

THE second novel of this Norwegian writer to be translated into English deals with a literary and political backwater of Christiania society. While we admire the skill with which a considerable and diversified group of characters is presented, there is something, to our taste, too deliberately artless about these people. The dramatis personæ act like children, with a simplicity that does not become them. Within the group a few romances take place. The most convincing of these is the reconciliation of a married couple who had previously agreed to go their separate ways, an episode which gains immensely from its straightforward and unsentimental handling. The parallel story of the young and beautiful country girl who is gradually taken away from her fiancé and corrupted by an unsuccessful poet suffers from the almost operative *naïveté* of its development.

The translator, Mr. Carl Christian Hyllested, has employed American idiom and slang to an extent which makes the book troublesome reading in places.

## FANTASIES.

*The Purple Frogs.* By H. W. Westbrook and Lawrence Grossmith. (Heath, Cranton & Co., 6s.)

IT would be unfair to do otherwise than meet 'The Purple Frogs' in the spirit of solemn nonsense in which it is written, and let us say in all seriousness that, as a piece of fooling, it is truly excellent.

Vaughan, a butler with a taste for invention, patents an indelible pencil (and case) and a bottle-stopper, on which he bestows the name of Hansard. As his wages are insufficient to recoup him for the cost of bringing these marvels before an indifferent public, he hits on the idea of increasing his income by a form of blackmail. He has observed that all travellers by sea are in the habit, when suffering from the depression due to seasickness, nervous terror, or attacks of conscience, of enclosing words of confession and farewell in a bottle which they then commit to the deep. But no sooner are the travellers safely on shore again than they repent of their rashness, and are willing to pay handsomely to have their communications returned intact. He therefore establishes an agency for the collection of these "Beached Bottles," and reaps a rich harvest.

At this point his master, Isambard Flanders, marries Cicely Ruffe, a girl much younger than himself, while Vaughan succumbs to the attractions of Stafford, her maid. Soon after her marriage, Cicely begins to fancy herself neglected, and writes to Stephen, a young man of her acquaintance, to meet her in Paris, in the hope of enlisting his sympathy. During the crossing the boat is held up in a dense fog, and, believing that they may be run down at any moment, Cicely writes a letter



to her husband, which she encloses in a bottle and throws overboard. The bottle is rescued by one of Vaughan's agents, who has set up in the blackmailing line on his own account, and Cicely is thereupon subjected to the usual "squeezing" process. Her husband's suspicions are aroused by her uneasy manner and distraught air, so, as a test, he writes a novelette called 'The Purple Frogs,' which he reads aloud to Cicely and Stephen. The result we leave to the reader to discover, with the clue that both the indelible pencil and the Hansard stopper play an important part in the affair.

This inner tale occupies half of the book, and includes some absurd situations. There are several illustrations in the form of "Cubist" music, in which the author professes to give us the musical equivalent of such ideas as "Long engagements are not to be tolerated," or "He found three bottles on the bookshelf."

If we might venture a criticism, it would be that, in our opinion, the waltz which forms the Cubist statement of 'The Purple Frogs' might, with advantage, have been a one-step, as a more truthful delineation of a frog's poetry of motion. We note with pleasure, however, that in the piece depicting the three bottles—which is written in all the angularity of four-time—the composer has been less influenced by the intense threeness of the bottles than by his rare appreciation of their "cubical" contents.

*The Beloved Premier.* By H. Maxwell. (John Long, 6s.)

ONCE again H. Maxwell shows his skill in original plots. We like his present book less than 'The Paramount Shop,' but it is well written, and, once picked up, is not easy to lay down.

"The Beloved Premier," Mr. Sloan, has a twin brother who is a ticket-of-leave man, really fond of prison, known to the world as William Joseph Knowles, and so like the Prime Minister that no one can tell them apart. Ordering the head of the Government to be locked up as the convict, he himself plays the part of Prime Minister. In that situation he tries to dispense simple justice to all the world, with the result that we are soon at war with every Power, and are annexed by Belgium.

It would be easy to pick holes in the story. In real life a Prime Minister, if he is not also Foreign Secretary, does not deal with foreign affairs without consulting the head of the Foreign Office. The terms of the loan to Portugal are impossible. Prime Ministers do not waste their time in drafting Bills. The head of the Local Government Board is called the President, not the Chairman. Indeed, one could find numerous flaws of this kind; but it is always clear that the author knows what he is writing about, and in his broad farce the leading parts are played as they should be played. The story is interesting, and there is no need to worry about its technical details.

*My Lady Bountiful.* By Gilbert Littlestone. (Ward, Lock & Co., 6s.)

WE hesitate between two possibilities: has Mr. Littlestone written what he esteems to be a serious novel? or has he contemplated a subtle jape after the manner of, say, 'The Green Carnation'?

There are gleams of internal evidence for both views, but perhaps we may pronounce for the latter. In that case we may say that the author should have thrown his whole heart into the task. He delights us with his young lady novelist who writes her ten thousand words between lunch and dinner, but he speaks of her opening her "serviette"—and that in a castle that contained (we must not say "boasted") a Saxon parlour wherein was "a round oak gate-legged table at which Richard of the Lion Heart had frequently partaken of meat." The châtelaine of the said castle disdains all vulgar modernity, but is not above selling—against all rules and regulations as to heirlooms—the Warwick Cup (whereon the King-Maker had scratched his monogram and a doggerel verse), the Dirk Bouts triptych, and other such priceless trifles to purchasers who could afford the ten thousand pounds or so necessary for her income.

Had Mr. Littlestone been more careful in his style and diction, he would have converted us to 'The Green Carnation' view, or to the other; as it is, we are left in doubt.

*The Day of Days.* By Louis J. Vance. (Grant Richards, 6s.)

THE author is wise to call this novel an extravaganza, and thus to disarm ordinary criticism, though the story is not merely melodramatic absurdity. Its purpose is deeper, and that is to hold up to ridicule modern New York as it is chronicled in the Yellow Press; its portrayal is ridiculously impossible. Mr. Vance errs on the side of over-elaboration of these absurdities, though he adds to the reader's excitement and amusement.

We have rarely, if ever, read a book in which such a variety of wild adventure was crowded into a space of less than twenty-four hours.

Though the unlimited use of American slang may at times weary the reader, the book is good enough to fill pleasantly an idle period.

#### MYSTERIES AND CRIMES.

*The Curse of Cloud.* By J. B. Harris-Burland. (Chapman & Hall, 6s.)

MR. HARRIS-BURLAND has written another of his mystery stories, wherein he depicts the effect of a curse directed by monks at the dissolution of the monasteries against a sensitive man who is also a coward. The curse forbids any eldest son from inheriting the land taken from the Church, and at Compton Ferrers, until the story opens, the curse has been fulfilled. The eldest son disappears before his father's death,

and the reader is left in suspense as to whether he is dead or alive until the concluding chapters. There is an unnecessary and rather bewildering thickening of the plot, and the final elucidation of the mystery appears to us to be crude. The characters are distinctive and clear-cut, and the impression is left that, if Mr. Harris-Burland were to devote some of the thought exerted in mere plot-making to developing the personalities in the story, he would produce work of value. As far as his delineation of character goes it is well done, but we are continually brought to a stop after anticipating the working out of environment on individuals, and vice versa. We hope to see this capacity more deeply exerted in succeeding books. The novel before us will provide a few hours of pleasant reading; for the events move quickly and are well narrated.

*The Price of Delusion.* By Sir William Magnay. (Stanley Paul & Co., 6s.)

HERE again is mystery, but in a more rational and everyday atmosphere, and treated in a sufficiently logical fashion. The characters are nearer the normal than usual in their speech and movement. Even the incidents of the mystery itself are reasonable and probable; too much so, perhaps!

We had hoped for some thrill greater than that vouchsafed to us. At one time arose the illuminating expectation that the Home Office expert would turn out to be the arch-criminal in subtle disguise; that the portrait painter might connive with him, and perhaps betray him at the conclusion; such hopes do arise in detective stories, where both reader and author are "out for" all the startling revelations that can be crammed into 300 pages or thereabouts. Sir William Magnay is, at least, eminently readable, and approaches life in his general treatment and characterization.

*That Strange Affair.* By Walter Brügge-Vallon. (Stanley Paul & Co., 6s.)

THE translator, Mr. Gregory Page, in dedicating this "detective" work to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, confesses that his hero recalls Dr. Watson rather than Sherlock Holmes, and we, too, have to confess that his candour is amply justified. This is the more regrettable in that we only pardon Watson—the skilful portrayal of whose ineptitude is, perhaps, even more pleasing than the recital of Holmes's miracles—for his efficiency as a foil to his hero.

In the present story he is the foil to stupidity even greater than his own. The result is a rather unconvincing series of adventures.

*Cleek of Scotland Yard.* By T. W. Hanshew. (Cassell & Co., 6s.)

MR. CLEEK, one of those sensational detectives who appear from time to time in fiction of a certain class, elucidates one complicated mystery after another, and at the last his own mystery, which links him

to nothing less than the crown of Maurania, "dear land, dear country, mine again!" This crown he abdicates as promptly as he had assumed it, preferring Scotland Yard, with intervals of love in a cottage.

The book is redolent with humour of the cliché type, consisting chiefly of rather forced Sam-Wellerisms on the part of the faithful youth whom Mr. Cleek has saved from a life of crime, and slang adjurations tacked on to the sayings of Mr. Narkom, the official detective—the Watson, rather, to Cleek's Sherlock Holmes. We say this advisedly, as at least two of the mysteries suggest comparisons not favourable to the present author. If he had been less anxious to crowd all the puzzle-pieces of his various crimes into so small a compass, the result would have been better reading. But Mr. Hanshaw aimed at popular success, and secured it.

*Shadows of the Past.* By John Littlejohn. (Chapman & Hall, 6s.)

DETECTION, mysteries, and crimes by an expert theorist, of a complex crime that endangers the life of an innocent man should apparently be the theme of this book; but we have too little of the expert, and too much of the criminal—the real criminals, that is, who involve the guiltless hero in their snares.

For the rest, we find incident and excitement to spare, even to a confusing, but never wholly unreadable degree. With more adherence to proportion the author might have made a highly interesting book.

### TRIALS AND DEVELOPMENTS.

*Two's Company.* By Dorothea Mackellar and Ruth Bedford. (Alston Rivers, 6s.)

THE study of the "human" boy is never an easy undertaking, but it is here attacked with courage, and carried out with good measure of conviction. "Rags," ultra-sensitive from neglect and cruel treatment, rescued by Remington, whom he adores but fears, until thorough understanding between the two is achieved, is an attractive and sufficiently real young person. Remington, at first stern and unyielding in his standards of right and wrong, then humanized by experience and the help of "Rags" friend, Viola Garrison, is also well presented, though apt to moralize overmuch concerning himself. Self-analysis in the hands of any but the greatest novelist is dangerous; an effect of artificiality is so soon induced, so hardly dispelled.

*Three against the World.* By Sheila Kaye-Smith. (Chapman & Hall, 6s.)

THE disappearance of plot from contemporary fiction, recently lamented by Prof. Saintsbury, is undoubtedly a distinguishing feature of the work of the younger generation of novelists. 'Three against the World' is a satisfactory specimen of the modern method. There are several characters, to all of whom are allotted parts sufficiently extended to exhibit a

consistent and carefully worked-out differentiation; but of plot, in the commonly accepted sense, there is little or none. The "three" are two brothers and a sister who belong to an unlucky family. In the first chapter the younger brother is returning home from prison, where he has been sent for the wrong sort of company-promoting. In the course of the story he is severely hit more than once, and his sister's adventures end in more suffering, while the other brother dies—somewhat unnecessarily, in our opinion. The tragedy is, however, by no means unrelieved. A nice sense of humour accompanies the recital of the doings of the family in question, and an escape from past evils is suggested at the end.

*Pomm's Daughter.* By Claire de Pratz. (Hutchinson & Co., 6s.)

THOUGH one cannot quite acquit the author of a too liberal use of the sentimental, this story of the adoption of a little girl by a retired French naval officer, who lives in Paris, and spends his time in collecting treasures from the bookstalls on the quays, is not without a certain ingenuous charm. The development of the young girl under the care and tuition of her absent-minded, but lovable old guardian is sketched with considerable skill, and a pretty little love-story is interwoven. Towards the end of the book—the action of which, by the way, takes place in the nineties—the solving of a mild mystery concerning the heroine's birth necessitates the shifting of the scene from Paris to London, and the doings of the little *ménage* suddenly transported to an English boarding-house are amusingly described.

*The Wonder-Worker.* By Vincent Brown. (Chapman & Hall, 6s.)

As in many instances on the stage and in fiction, the wonder-worker is only heard and not seen. His words cause much searching of heart to a dear old couple, whose main sin seems to have been the secrecy in which they have shrouded the fact of their children's illegitimacy. On confession being made, it becomes evident that the parents have failed to transmit such a measure of their own charity to their offspring as will make them attempt to mitigate the world's curse. Another well-drawn character is a charwoman whom the "Wonder-Worker" helps to conquer a mania for drink; but best of all, as an example, is a bishop whose sympathy with his fellows translates itself into so many good works as to make pride and good living impossible.

*Bedesman 4.* By Mary J. H. Skrine. (Duckworth & Co., 2s. 6d. net.)

THIS story is a rather idyllic presentment of the incipient career of a quarryman's son, who attracts the notice and favour of a professor from Oxford, and thereby gains the education he requires. A momentary crisis threatening cessation of his school life is tided over by what strikes us as

rather obvious mechanism; apparent again, and perhaps unduly forced, in the happy ending.

The descriptions of the country-side and of school-life are picturesque and sympathetic, but the story as a whole is slight.

*The Music-Makers.* By Louise Mack. (Mills & Boon, 6s.)

IT did not need the final *e* of the Christian name to indicate that this book was written by a woman. The author literally revels in descriptions of the garments which clothe her creations. There is none of those vaguely impressionistic effects which a man would feel sufficient to set forth the appearance of his heroines, but details of material, cut, and finish in such abundance as to satisfy the most exacting of feminine readers.

The plot deals with matter sufficiently out of the ordinary to carry on the interest, in spite of the somewhat colourless character-drawing.

Jess Levellier is the daughter of an American millionaire, and has entered on a successful musical career as a composer in London. She befriends a poverty-stricken young man, who turns out to be a fellow-artist with an opera which no one will look at. Intending to surprise him, she uses her influence to have it anonymously produced, and it is hailed at once as a masterpiece. Both public and manager are firm in the belief that she is the composer—a belief she tries to correct on the "first night" by requesting Ferencz Alwyn to come forward and acknowledge the calls for "author." Alwyn, however, having accidentally dropped in at a rehearsal, is under the impression that she has stolen the manuscript from him, and does not wait to hear it produced. Before the misunderstanding is cleared up there are many dangers and matrimonial pitfalls to be escaped. Numerous other characters help to make the scene of activity a crowded one.

### SHORT STORIES.

*Heroines, and Others.* By St. John Lucas. (Blackwood & Sons, 6s.)

THOUGH each of the tales in this book attains a high degree of merit, not one of them strikes us as bearing on its face the inevitability of the short story. In fact, we suspect the first, 'Miss Amelia,' of having its origin in the plot of a prospective novel running to its hundreds of pages. The author dallies with the solution, which is a foregone conclusion for 50 pages, and when it has occurred, and we feel at last well started on the circumstances arising from it, we find that the tale is told. To our mind it is a tale with its larger and better part left untold. The second story, 'Maria,' is longer and better, but the clue to the mystery of two wasted lives is not entirely satisfying. The shortest of all, 'The History of Ridolfo,' is far and away the best. It



occupies only eight pages, but in those eight pages egotistical obsession is born, grows, and overthrows the reason of the man that harbours it. We advise readers to take the three remaining tales before this one; otherwise, owing to comparison, they will not enjoy them so much as they ought.

*The Shears of Delilah.* By Virginia Terhune van de Water. (Putnam, 6s.)

THE author gives us story after story of people who, we must confess, are extremely disagreeable. They delight in misunderstanding and suspecting one another, and they have a perfect talent for launching unpleasant and undeserved accusations. Indeed, we should be extremely sorry to have to meet in the flesh the "Nagger," the husband of the Liar, or the two children of the "successful," but unhappy mother.

This is no reflection on the teller of the stories, except so far as her choice of personages is concerned; her technique and realism, both excellent of their kind, might equally well have been devoted to types of a more lovable or at least amiable nature.

*The Adventuress, and Other Stories.* By George Willoughby. (Goschen, 2s. net.)

OF these fourteen "stories" three are distinctly striking by reason of a certain passionate crudity, a realism that gives actual discomfort when we think that it may mean reality. These three are 'Lily May,' 'Life Wins,' and 'A Sea Captain'—quick, cruel, sensational sketches that evolve thoughts of pastel work: dark, clouded backgrounds, now lit up by the lurid gleams of the lowest life, now suffused with a changing glow of luxury. We would add the 'Watch Night Service,' did it not recall over-forcibly Mr. Wells's 'Love and Mr. Lewisham.'

'A London Dawn' and the 'Psychology of Fires' are more in the nature of *toits de force*: vivid in their way, but unreal, showing too much composition in the pastel. This defect is still more marked in the descriptions of the Isle of Dogs and Rosherville, and it reaches a climax in the 'Correspondence.'

Mr. Willoughby (are we right in the sex?) delights in his technique, which is nearly, if not always, equalled by his observation; but it is our impression that both will run to seed if devoted overmuch to sketches of this nature; in a larger theme these qualities would be kept within bounds, and so be more effective. He might try a wider and more complex field. 'The Adventuress,' for example (though its abrupt ending, evidently so designed, is not devoid of cleverness), might be developed into a good novel.

#### JUVENILE.

*A Little Radiant Girl.* By Katharine Tynan. (Blackie & Son, 6s.)

THIS book is evidently written for school-girls in their teens. We rather suspect the modern schoolgirl has a secret preference for her brother's books of ad-

venture and travel; the everyday life of Francie Chevallier will appear to her a pleasant, though scarcely enthralling story.

We hear of Francie at school in Paris, making many friends, then at home in an English village, and finally earning her own living in London. We would willingly have heard less of the village period and more of the London one, which is somewhat meagrely treated. The author occasionally allows her feeling for poetic fancy and wish to avoid the commonplace to lead her into expressions which sound a little peculiar.

Francie is a kind and warm-hearted girl, but her charm is a little too much insisted on. The other characters all have pretty manners, and are irreproachably well-connected.

*More about Froggy.* By Brenda. (R.T.S., 2s.)

FROGGY is already well known to a host of readers, who will be glad to hear of his further adventures up to manhood. Brenda writes well and easily, supplying the human touches which are particularly desirable in stories destined to improve the occasion. Some will think, perhaps, that Froggy's loyalty and grit might have met with more prolonged trials. He has difficulties in the Home which shelters him, and later on the seas, but their timely disappearance suggests that he is specially favoured by Providence.

*Cornwall's Wonderland.* By Mabel Quiller-Couch. (Dent & Sons, 3s. 6d. net.)

THE title of this collection of stories, 'Cornwall's Wonderland,' suggests a treasure-house filled with lore such as, perhaps, no other corner of England could furnish. The Phœnicians, the knights of Lyonesse, the Spaniards of the Armada, the "stan-naries" instinct with old-world custom and character, the tradition that two of the Apostles (St. Peter and St. Paul, if our memory does not fail us) landed on the Cornish coast as pioneers of Christianity—from such sources alone we might have expected much. The author doubtless suffered from the constraint of space, and perhaps from the fact that she was writing for children; but, those limitations conceded, we still feel that her treatment is slight and cursory. The 'Tristan and Isolde' story is, however, well told, Malory being used with discrimination and clearness.

The atmosphere of wild moorland and rocky sea-coast, which might have been more fully emphasized even for young readers, is often obscured by unnecessary descriptions of dress and decoration. Of course, in telling a fairy story to a child, detailed description is an essential; but even in this there are bounds; superfluity of the trivial, of parade, must be avoided. The impression we have after reading this book is that the author is not sufficiently spontaneous for her audience, nor various enough in her choice of the tales she sets before them.

#### HISTORY AND ADVENTURE.

*The Red Virgin.* By C. Frederic Turner. (Hodder & Stoughton, 6s.)

IT is a pleasing surprise to find, in the case of a prominently advertised novel, some merit to correspond to the advertisement. The merit hardly comes out where it might be expected, but is, let us say, sufficiently prominent elsewhere in the book to justify this anomaly. The struggles and intrigues for the Regency of "Grimland" present a wide scope for adventure and excitement, plot and counterplot, espionage, secret service, anarchy, and aristocracy—indeed, almost every species of hazard that can be imagined in such a connexion.

But the writer is one of those rather rare story-tellers who have a sense of proportion both in their facts and their style, and he succeeds in making his characters, and the events that await and befall them, sufficiently reasonable and logical.

It is curious that the one character on whom our attention should be concentrated—the Red Virgin herself—is of all the least lifelike and probable. We have the impression that she was the groundwork of a book that has "written itself" away from her. In a word, the book is better, perhaps, than it was meant to be. Two scenes are specially commendable: the meeting of the spies in the council hall of the "Rathesherren," and the fall of the avalanche that retards the escape of the villain and frustrates his plans. The description, both of town and country, is convincing; indeed, it seems to betray the land which the author has chosen as his theatre.

*Perilous Seas.* By E. Gallienne Robin. (R. & T. Washbourne, 3s. 6d. net.)

MR. ROBIN endeavours to write a history of the French Revolution, tell a story, and present a treatise upon the Roman Catholic faith—all in the same book. It is not an "historical novel," except in respect of treating an historical period; the characters play no part in the history thereof; they merely sit at home in Guernsey and recount to each other the doings in Paris, practically in the language of Mr. Hilaire Belloc, as the author himself explains in the Preface. As a history lesson it is passable. As a tale the book lacks warmth and interest. Mr. Robin has not the art of presenting living and feeling men and women. His people are puppets who act and speak at his will; some of them are mere shadows. At least (though he might have made more of his local colouring) he succeeds in presenting a fairly realistic picture of Guernsey life, and he gives some account of its ancient customs; but the book as a whole is no more than a chronicle of events. Religion is a pervading influence. All the good people are Catholics, and all the bad are Protestants; the mere harmony of the heroine's voice when repeating "Our Lady" leads to conversion; she is, in fact, a better "missionary" than her author.

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